



## Fact Sheet

November 5, 2003

# Youth Summit on Cannabis

### Purpose of the Youth Summit

- To provide youth with an opportunity to participate in an awareness event concerning the health, social, legal and political issues related to cannabis use.
- To facilitate peer leadership opportunities to disseminate accurate, up-to-date information about cannabis use issues.
- To empower the creation of informed opinions about issues related to cannabis use.
- To enhance the collaboration between community agencies and organizations in addressing issues related to cannabis use among youth.

### Key Messages

- There are health, social, legal and political issues to consider around cannabis use.
- Youth have an integral role in influencing their peers to make informed opinions and choices around cannabis use issues.
- Community agencies and organizations are working together to address cannabis use issues among youth.

### Myths and Facts about Cannabis

- *Myth ... Marijuana will be made legal*

This is not true. What is currently under discussion is Bill C38 in the House of Commons that would make marijuana for personal use *decriminalized*. This would mean that it would be removed from the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and therefore be a ticket-able offence similar to a speeding ticket. There is not any discussion to make it legal to use. It has been suggested that trafficking and selling marijuana would remain a criminal offence, with higher consequences imposed

- *Myth ... Marijuana is all natural and therefore cannot hurt you*

This is not true. Health officials remain unsure of the long-term effects of extensive marijuana use. There is, however, consensus that it is not a benign substance. Initial studies support respiratory damage similar to that caused by smoking tobacco, as well as impairment to memory, reaction time, coordination and depth perception when under the influence. Research will determine how long these effects last as well as if the effects are permanent

- *Fact ... Marijuana is beneficial for particular medical treatments*

It is a fact that marijuana use increases appetite and reduces nausea. As such, it has been helpful for patients dealing with the side-effects of AIDS and cancer treatments. There has also been some indication that THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) is beneficial for those who suffer from glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy

- *Fact ... Marijuana is an illegal substance*

Anyone who contravenes the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to the following:

- Possession of marijuana - For a first offence, a fine of up to \$1000 and/or imprisonment for a term up to 6 months. For subsequent offences, the fine can be as high as \$2000 and imprisonment term of up to one year
- Possession for the purposes of trafficking - Imprisonment for life
- Importing or exporting - Imprisonment for life
- Producing - Imprisonment for a term up to 7 years